

New York's Antiterror Funds Disappoint, Officials Say

By [RAY RIVERA](#)

Published: July 8, 2007

After the city's share of antiterrorism money for high-risk communities was cut last year by 40 percent, New York officials said they were assured by the [Department of Homeland Security](#) that this year would be better.

The agency modified the way it awarded the grants and worked closely with the city's Police and Fire Departments to shape their funding applications.

As a result, more money may be on the way, but it may not be as much as city and state officials expected. The department would not reveal the amount yesterday, but Representative Peter T. King of Long Island, the ranking Republican on the House Committee on Homeland Security, said that the metropolitan area was set to receive \$134 million under the grants appropriated for the 2007 fiscal year.

The figure represents a 7.6 percent increase from last year's \$124.5 million grant, but is still well below the \$207.5 million it received the year before.

Mr. King said he was given the figure by people inside the department. "The Department of Homeland Security still doesn't get it," Mr. King said. "All of us were clearly told it was going to be different this time, so this comes as a real surprise, and a real disappointment."

Senator [Charles E. Schumer](#), a Democrat, took a harsher tone in criticizing Homeland Security and its leader, Michael Chertoff.

"It is hard to believe, especially given the recent threats and attacks in Great Britain, that D.H.S. persists in the folly of giving money to places that don't need it, rather than New York City," Mr. Schumer said in a statement. "Secretary Chertoff has never given a good explanation as to why [the department] distributes security funding this way and why he has never lived up to the promises he made to the New York delegation when he was a nominee."

Homeland security officials declined to comment until an official announcement was made. That announcement is expected later this week, Mr. King said.

He did not have figures for other cities yesterday. The numbers for the New York area — which includes Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester Counties — were first reported yesterday by Newsday.

Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) said through a spokesman that he could not comment until the official figures were released. But a source in his administration said that the number had been independently verified and that the mayor's office was less than thrilled.

The Bloomberg administration has lobbied Congress and Homeland Security heavily over the last few years to amend the funding process. Mr. Bloomberg has frequently criticized it as being driven by pork-barrel politics.

The financing is being closely watched by New York officials, who were outraged last year by the cuts to the city's share of the antiterrorism grants, while other cities, including Omaha, Louisville, Ky., and Charlotte, N.C., received large increases.

The urban grants, which are intended for cities and metropolitan areas most at risk of a terrorist attack, represent nearly half of the \$1.7 billion the department will distribute this year to help cities and states prevent and respond to terrorist attacks.

As part of its reasoning in cutting New York's share in 2006, the department said in a report that it found numerous flaws in the city's application and gave poor grades to many of its proposals. Federal officials were particularly critical of the city's plan to use some of the money to cover overtime costs for police officers guarding high-risk targets like bridges or subways. The department wanted the grants steered toward more permanent safeguards like improved communications systems and better antiterrorism and emergency response training.

City officials criticized the department's peer-review process used to evaluate the applications, especially after reading in the report that the region had no "national monuments or icons."

In a response, Mr. Chertoff wrote that several significant landmarks were actually classified in higher-risk categories as a way to help New York's application. The [Empire State Building](#), for example, was classified as a large office building, a higher-risk target than a national monument.

But Mr. Chertoff has also acknowledged that last year's process was flawed and that he hoped to steer as much money as he could to the cities with the greatest needs.

As part of that effort, the department created a two-tier system to divide the \$747 million allocated for urban grants this year. Under the new formula, the six areas deemed to be at greatest risk of a terrorist attack would share \$411 million, while 39 other areas would compete for the remaining \$336 million.

The six regions are the New York area and northern New Jersey, which includes Jersey City and Newark; the San Francisco Bay Area; Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif.; Chicago; Houston; and Washington.

In addition to creating the new tier system, Mr. King said the Homeland Security also worked closely with the city's Fire and Police Departments to write the grant application in order to avoid any of the misunderstandings that might have led to less money last year.

"All of that cooperation, all of that back and forth, and we only recover 10 percent of that \$83 million we lost" from 2005, Mr. King said.

Mr. Schumer raised the possibility yesterday that the \$134 million might have to be split with northern New Jersey because of the new formula, but Mr. King and a city official said that was not the case.

Roger Shatzkin, a spokesman for the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, said his office was not aware of how much grant money the state would get in urban area funding. "We would hope that we did as well as we did last year, if not a little better," he said.

In 2006, the Newark and Jersey City area received a combined urban grant of \$34.3 million, up from \$19.4 million in 2005.

Manny Fernandez contributed reporting.